

**OFFICER DEVELOPMENT FOR
THE FORT WORTH FIRE DEPARTMENT**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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Appendices A-F Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at <http://www.lrc.fema.gov> to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.

ABSTRACT

Good officers are the key to a well-run fire service organization. The Fort Worth Fire Department, like many other departments, has experienced significant demographic changes in the past several years. As a result of these changes, the department has seen the seniority level of its personnel, and, in many cases, the experience level of its officers decline over the same period of time. This situation developed for a number of reasons and resulted in an increase of poor decision-making not only on the fireground, but also in non-combat situations as well.

There was not an officer development program in place in the Fort Worth Fire Department and very little was done to develop the decision-making and management skill levels of its officers and future officers. The only preparation received for an officer position was the knowledge obtained from the promotional study material and on-the-job training. Continuing education was provided, but officer-specific training was not included in the continuing education. Occasional seminars were offered on a voluntary and limited basis, resulting in limited participation. The last officer-specific training program was offered in 1988.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the need for an officer development program within the Fort Worth Fire Department and to identify program elements that may be beneficial to developing a program for the department. The evaluative research method was employed to conduct this study. The research questions answered by this study were:

1. What are other departments of similar size to Fort Worth doing for officer development?
2. What officer development training do Fort Worth Fire Officers feel they need?
3. What curriculum could the Fort Worth Fire Department include in an officer development program?

A literature review was conducted, followed by an external telephone survey of seven fire departments of similar size and makeup of Fort Worth. Additionally, an internal survey was conducted of Fort Worth Fire Department personnel to ascertain their desire and perceived need for an officer development program. This survey was followed by a focus group discussion and a course preference survey. Results from the survey were tabulated and research was conducted to answer the stated research questions. Research indicated that there was a great desire on the part of Fort Worth personnel to be provided an officer training program. It also identified strategies employed by other departments that may provide Fort Worth an opportunity to develop an effective program.

Recommendations resulting from this research included implementing a officer development program within the Fort Worth Fire Department, establishing an officer development committee to develop and monitor the program for the department, and conducting further study of successful officer development programs in an effort to develop and improve its own program for the Fort Worth Fire Department.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past, a fire officer's major concern was with fire suppression and other tactical considerations and was required to have little, if any, managerial skills. Today's fire officer, however, is confronted with a whole new set of issues that he or she must manage in a diverse and sometimes litigious society. To be successful in this new and ever changing arena, a fire officer must possess or be provided with the tools necessary to manage these diverse and complex issues.

The Fort Worth Fire Department (FWFD), like many other departments, has experienced significant demographic changes in the past ten years. As a result, the department has seen the seniority, and in many cases, the experience level of its officers decline over the same period of time. This situation has developed for a number of reasons and has resulted in an increase in poor decision-making not only on the fireground, but also in numerous disciplinary and personnel issues as well.

Currently there is no officer development program in place in the Fort Worth Fire Department. Officers are promoted through a written civil service exam, which historically has done little to test the decision-making and management skills that are required to effectively function as an officer in today's Fire Service. The only preparation received for an officer position is the knowledge obtained from the promotional study material and from on-the-job training. Continuing education consists of 20 hours of state-mandated structural fire suppression training and 20 hours of emergency medical training annually. In addition to these State mandated continuing education hours, occasional seminars and specialty-team specific training is sometimes offered throughout the year. The department has not offered an official officer-specific training program since 1988.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the need for an officer development program within the Fort Worth Fire Department and to identify program elements that may be beneficial to developing a program for the department. The evaluative research method was employed to conduct this study. The research questions to be answered by this study are:

4. What are other departments of similar size to Fort Worth doing for officer development?
5. What officer development training do Fort Worth Fire Officers feel they need?
6. What curriculum could the Fort Worth Fire Department include in an officer development program?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Fort Worth encompasses 312 square miles of north central Texas and is populated by 504,000 residents. The Fort Worth Fire Department provides fire and emergency medical services for the city. Additionally, the department is responsible for the city's emergency management function, fire prevention and education programs, arson investigation, bomb disposal, hazardous material response, technical rescue, and emergency marine response. The Fire Department is staffed with 750 uniformed personnel operating 38 fire stations. This project relates to the Executive Development Course because its primary goal is to explore avenues for developing fire service officers into future fire service leaders.

The Fort Worth Fire Department has experienced a tremendous turnover in personnel. Approximately 270 personnel have left the department over the past 10 years. This number is due primarily to retirements, but a few have occurred because of resignations or terminations. Additionally, the department has grown in size due to annexation and the expanding boundaries of the city fueled by a strong economy. In the past ten years, five stations have been added, for a total of 38 stations across the city. Two additional stations are scheduled to go on line in the next year. The department had 717 authorized civil service positions in 1988. This number dropped to 651 in 1992 due to a sluggish local economy, but has increased to the current 750 positions. The result is that approximately 215 employees have joined the department since 1992, and 70 additional employees have joined the department since 1998. This has resulted in a department where 40 percent of the department has less than 10 years of experience and 30% have less than 5 years.

Fort Worth adopted Texas State Civil Service Law (Texas Municipal Code, Chapter 143) in the 1940's. This state law covers many aspects of Police and Fire Department personnel issues and operations in the State of Texas. Civil Service law mandates a period of two years between promotional eligibility. As a result, a Fort Worth firefighter is eligible to promote to Engineer after only two years of employment, and to Lieutenant after only four years. Promotional opportunities have been numerous due to turnover. An example of the effects of this turnover is the fact that only 40 of the 135 Engineers on the department currently have over two years in rank. As a consequence, firefighting experience is lacking in many of our young officers.

Another factor that contributes to the lack of experience is the decline in fire responses over the past 20 years. Structure fire responses decreased approximately 67 percent over the 20-year period from 1981 to 2000 (Appendix A). However, total responses increased 52 percent during the same period. The amount of firefighting experience an officer could gain fifteen years ago has decreased and is likely to continue this decline. Therefore, young officers could potentially be deprived of the opportunity to gain valuable experience that was previously possible.

The current promotional system is based upon a competitive written examination. This is mandated by civil service law and can only be altered by amending state law. Though a non-subjective promotional practice is the general perception of this system, the ability to select truly qualified applicants has been questioned. Candidates are judged solely by their ability to score high enough on a 100 question multiple-choice examination.

The fire service workplace has also changed tremendously. Over the past fifteen years diversity, sexual harassment, and conflict resolution have become increasingly important. The numbers of complaints of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and violence in the workplace have increased dramatically in the past fifteen years. Fire officers of the past could deal with personnel in a military manner, with little or no concern for the issues above. Today's fire service manager must be familiar with the laws concerning these issues and how they affect the workplace. Disciplinary actions are also on the rise. Since the beginning of 1997, 57 disciplinary actions have occurred, including ten terminations (Appendix B). Proper documentation and familiarity with civil service law is necessary to properly prepare officers to deal with disciplinary actions. Very little training on subjects related to discipline and personnel issues has been delivered to FWFD officers.

Liability issues are becoming increasingly more important. The number of lawsuits involving public safety agencies has increased significantly over the past ten years. Awareness of job liability issues is becoming increasingly important for public safety workers. Seminars on these issues have been offered to FWFD personnel, but not since 1997, and none have been mandatory. As a result, many officers have not received adequate training in this essential area.

As in other professions, technology is becoming increasingly important in the fire service. The FWFD has had computer and e-mail capabilities at all stations for approximately five years. Though initial officer training on the use of e-mail was conducted, new officers and future officers are not currently scheduled to receive this training. In addition, no training on the use of numerous software programs has been

mandated for all officers. It is currently offered voluntarily to all city employees, and classes are full weeks in advance. As a result, many officers are not competent in the use of many helpful software programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The fire service has done an excellent job of training firefighters, but has done a very poor job of training company officers (Masten, 1987, pg. 61). This is evident in the FWFD. To become a firefighter, you must complete a 584-hour course designed to exceed NFPA Standard 1001, Firefighter I & II levels, as well as a 200-hour Emergency Medical Technician course. But, to become an officer, you must only pass a written promotional examination.

This situation is similar in other departments. Three surveys conducted in the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Development Program in 1983, 1994, and 1996 told a similar story. The 1983 survey revealed that 71% of the 46 surveyed cities did not have an ongoing training program for officers and 85% of the respondents did not feel they were adequately prepared for an officer role (Bolger, 1983). The 1996 survey yielded similar results. Of the 36 responding cities, 91.7 percent did not have adequate officer training programs in place, and 85% received little or no training for an officer position (Belin, 1996). A 1994 survey of 44 Florida fire departments revealed that only half had any type of training program in place for their fire officers (Diaz, 1994 pg. 13). While fire officers have wide-ranging responsibilities, they seldom have more than on-the-job training for the position. Even the guidelines and reading materials used in

company officer promotional exams often do not reflect the actual operational procedures and attitudes of the department (Cavallari, 1997, pg. 16).

When you consider that the “company officer is the most important person in the fire department” (Queens, 1993, pg. 21), the lack of training and development is a cause for great concern. Indeed, the “...company officer is that vital connecting link between the initial stages and the mitigation of the emergency. The company officer provides the first strategy on which other officers build until the incident is concluded” (IFSTA, 1999, pg. 7). In fact, it is the fire officer that “...sets the pace for thousands of fire companies throughout this country, and it’s the officer that serves as the role model for future generations of firefighters” (Gardiner, 1992 pg. 5).

Though there are many important issues facing the fire service, we “should not take for granted leadership's significant role in reducing costs, injuries, and fireground losses, and improving departmental working conditions. More highly educated and experienced management will significantly improve our workplace” (Cavallari, 1997).

Initial officer training is obviously greatly needed. No one factor has more ultimate effect on a fire department's operations than its training program (Didactic Systems Inc., 1985, pg. 350). The goal of any fire department's officer training program should be “...the provision of the best possible training so that each person within the department will operate at acceptable performance levels, relative to their rank and assignment” (Capron, 1992 pg. 3). The fire officer's job is now so complex and involved that experience must be supplemented by special means of training (Capron, 1992). In addition to dealing with job-related technical issues, today's company officer must be

able to deal with the realities of modern society, such as litigation, human relations, workforce diversity, sexual harassment, drug abuse, employee counseling, and recognizing and dealing with stress (Diaz, 1994). We must provide the company officer with all the tools he/she needs to do the job in modern society.

Most areas have Fire Protection Technology programs available through the local community college. Many states offer Fire Officer Certifications that are tied to these programs. Two such states are Florida and California. Though these programs are very useful and offer considerable training for fire officers, the time and monetary requirement is prohibitive for most metro fire departments to require completion for promotion (Bowman, 1990, pg. 2). An analysis of several metro fire departments' officer training programs revealed a seemingly successful, locally designed strategy. Locally designed curriculum tailored to fit local needs, while staying within the guidelines of NFPA 1021, may be the most appropriate strategy for most metro departments. However, “training the right people at the right time in the right content, and getting the right outcomes at the right costs, requires a clear understanding of organizational purpose” (Foster, 1989, pg. 18). Local organizational needs must be considered when developing training programs. The organization's workforce can often best describe their training needs. “Spending time with the personnel you wish to train is the best way to develop an understanding of the problem issues and concerns of the employees you wish to train” (Foster, 1989). Top management's role should be limited to policy-setting and defining objectives consistent with the department's mission (Bowman, 1990). Of course, top management must convey to the employees the commitment the organization is willing to make toward the success of the training program (Bowman, 1990).

Many officer training programs are focusing on non-traditional subjects, as well as traditional fire service technical courses such as fire tactics, HazMat, and ICS; leadership and personnel management skills that are desired by many fire officers and aspiring officers. Nancy Grant, Ph.D., and David Hoover, Ph.D., believe the “...application of leadership skills must expand from fireground emergencies to cover the organization, scheduling, and management of firefighters' non-emergency responsibilities and training” (Grant and Hoover, 1994, pg. 14). This emphasis on leadership and professional development represents a trend in the fire service from the old rules of command and control to an emphasis on “building relationships based on character and competence” (Caldwell and Hynes, 1996, pg. 24). However, more than a few leadership courses in an officer training program are required to successfully teach leadership. “Leadership must be taught through formal training programs, advanced education, on-the-job training, vicarious learning experiences, and mentoring” (Grant and Hoover, 1994).

Karen Hamlet, in *Fire Chief* magazine, recommends applying a “three-skills approach” to manager/supervisor training, used in the public sector, to the fire service. This approach involves teaching technical skills, “which implies an understanding of, and proficiency in a particular kind of activity, specifically one involving process, procedures, or techniques” (Hamlet, 1999, pg. 28). Human skill is the “manager's ability to work as a group member and to build cooperative effort within the team he/she leads” (Hamlet, 1999). Conceptual skill involves the “ability to see the organization as a whole... (and recognize)... how the various functions of the organization depend on one another and affect all others” (Hamlet, 1999). Hamlet believes fire officers require some ability in

each of the three skills. Fire departments should develop these skills upon promotion to the officer rank so that officers continually use them in dealing with their responsibilities.

Another non-traditional fire service skill that must be taught is computer literacy. The fire service officer of today has computerized technology available that was virtually unknown only ten years ago (Granito, 1996, pp. 228-229). "Fire officers must be proficient with a variety of communication technologies including fax machines, e-mail, electronic bulletin boards, and the Internet" (Gwaltney, 1997, pg. 23).

In addition to initial training, officer training should be conducted continuously. "As technologies change, management techniques evolve, and fireground technical operations evolve, it is imperative that officers continue to receive training and guidance in these, and other areas" (Gardiner, 1992). The Fire Service cannot continue to overlook the value and importance of its company officers. They are the vital link to a successful organization and must receive the appropriate attention and resources to develop and maintain their skill levels. "Most organizations have a thorough plan for managing their fleet. We are overdue in providing similar guidance for managing our human resources as well" (Compton, 2000, pg 25).

PROCEDURES

This research was conducted in Fort Worth, Texas, a city of 504,000 people. The Fort Worth Fire Department is a paid department currently consisting of 750 uniformed personnel. The Fire Department recently experienced a significantly high turnover in the past ten years resulting in a younger, less experienced workforce.

Research began with a literature review conducted at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in August of 2001. Further literature reviews were conducted at the Cleburne Public Library in Cleburne, Texas, the Fort Worth Public Library in Fort Worth, Texas, the City of Fort Worth Resource Center, the Fort Worth Fire Department Resource Center, and the International Association of Fire Fighters Local 440 information center.

The literature review focused on officer development related issues in the fire service, identifying training trends, reviewing officer development programs of other departments, and evaluating the desire and perceived need for an officer development program within the Fort Worth Fire Department. The literature review examined both fire service specific information as well as general information concerning personnel and officer development strategies.

The Educational Services Division of the Fort Worth Fire Department was consulted and an interview with Training Chief Rudy Jackson was conducted on October 15, 2001. The interview concerned possible needs of the department in developing future officers. The interview was conducted for one hour, followed by additional phone conversations, and explored a variety of topics including statistics that could be used to analyze the effect of an officer development program. Additionally, information was

gathered concerning other fire departments that were conducting officer development programs. The Texas Commission on Fire Protections Certification Curriculum Manual was identified as the evaluation criteria for acceptable officer development programs. This standard follows NFPA 1021 and was recently adopted as the state standard for officer development programs.

A survey instrument was developed to gather information from other fire departments of similar size (Appendix C). The survey questions were based on information gathered during the literature review and from the interview conducted with Chief Jackson. Information solicited by the survey concerned the existence of an officer development program, whether or not the program has been successful in improving the quality of officers, and elements of the officer development programs.

The Senior Staff members of the Fort Worth Fire Department reviewed the survey. After the initial review, the survey was revised based on input received from the initial review process. A final review was conducted and surveys were conducted by telephone with seven departments of similar size to the Fort Worth Fire Department that have conducted officer development programs for several years. The data from the survey was analyzed to determine what information would be useful in developing an officer development program for the Fort Worth Fire Department.

Guided by the initial external survey results, input was solicited from all FWFD officers. This was done by conducting an open-ended survey (Appendix D) of the entire FWFD and by holding focus group meetings throughout the process.

The internal survey asked open-ended questions of respondents relating to desired skills and qualities of officers; the department's effectiveness in developing these skills;

improved methods of officer development; and the type of training to best prepare personnel for officer positions.

The focus group consisted of selected members of the FWFD. Members were selected based upon diversity in rank, seniority, assignments, gender, and race. The group ranged in experience from four years to 30+ years and included all ranks, from firefighter to deputy chief. This group was asked to answer and discuss a variety of topics concerning desired skills and qualities of officers; effectiveness of the department's development of these skills; the need for officer development; and the desired contents of an officer development program.

Specific training needs of officers and aspiring officers were assessed through the survey, focus group, and interviews of key personnel. The focus groups were asked for input relating to the specific training needs of officers and aspiring officers. Desired qualities and skills of successful officers were evaluated, and then related to possible instructional courses for officers.

Existing officer development programs were researched to assess perceived needs of other fire departments. Research from students of the National Fire Academy Executive Officer Development Program was also reviewed for results of similar research and application to other fire departments.

RESULTS

1. What are other departments of similar size to Fort Worth doing for officer development?

Officer training programs exist in several cities throughout the United States. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has adopted a national standard, NFPA 1021, for fire officers. The Texas Commission on Fire Protection has recently adopted this standard as a state certification standard. Florida and California have both offered a Fire Officer Certification program, based in local community colleges, for many years. Seven specific officer training programs in the U.S. were studied. Administrators of fire officer training programs from fire departments in Oklahoma City, Phoenix, Seattle, Los Angeles City, and Houston were surveyed by telephone concerning the elements of their officer development programs. All five cities also sent specific program curriculum to be studied. The Officer Candidate School in Prince George's County, Maryland, and the Officer Academy in Santa Ana, California, were also reviewed

The Oklahoma City Fire Department (OCFD) has separate officer training programs in place for the Major and Captain ranks. Each program is two weeks long and approximately 80 hours. The Major's Academy contains courses in Leadership, Creative Writing, Customer Service, Incident Command, Accident Investigation, Rescue Tactics, and overviews of various fire department divisions. The Leadership courses cover problem solving, conflict resolution, and managing in a changing environment. The Captain's Academy also contains Leadership courses, Performance Evaluations, Recruit Evaluations, Tactics, Sexual Harassment, Computer Skills, Domestic Preparedness, and overviews of various fire department divisions, as well as the labor union. The

Leadership courses cover coaching, discipline, and situational leadership. Oklahoma City reassigns their personnel to training for a 40-hour week schedule for two consecutive weeks. OCFD personnel teach the majority of courses, however, Oklahoma City Human Resources personnel also teach some of the courses.

The Phoenix Fire Department has been recognized as a progressive department for many years. Their Captain's Academy is also recognized as an excellent program. This program was originally designed on the NFPA Fire Officer I & II standard, but are now customized to fit the needs of the department. The original course was 80 hours, but will soon increase to 120 hours. Personnel are reassigned to a 40-hour week for 3 consecutive weeks to complete the academy. The Phoenix Captain's Academy curriculum includes technical coursework including Basic Tactics, House Fire Tactics, Apartment Fire and Highrise Tactics, Fireground Simulations, Building Construction, Specialty Team Training, and Engine and Ladder Company Functions. In addition, Human Relations curriculum such as Diversity and Team Building, Personnel Management Scenarios, CISD, PIO and Community Campaigns, and Performance Evaluations are included. Instructional Techniques and Lesson Plan Development, Arson Investigation for Captains, EMS Documentation and Legal Concerns, Safety Practices for Company Officers, and Fire Prevention for Company Officers are also included.

The Seattle Fire Department (SFD) has a unique Officer Training and Development Program that trains officers to better perform their job and encourages officer candidates to seek higher education. Officer Training is done in-house through a combination of an Officer Academy for new officers, and officer-specific continuing education. Officer training coursework includes Human Relations courses such as

Diversity Training, Conflict Resolution, and Sexual Harassment Awareness. Fire-specific coursework includes Engine and Truck Company Operations, Incident Management, Basic and Advanced Tactics, and Specialty Team Awareness Training.

Officer Development for the SFD is contracted through the local community college fire protection technology program. The city reimburses all tuition costs, and the community college receives state funding for contact hours. The program is organized into a three-year curriculum. The first year results in an officer certification necessary to obtain a promotion from the Seattle Fire Department. SFD promotional exams are civil-service competitive written exams. However, when the top-scoring candidates are interviewed for promotions, completion of the officer certification program is very helpful. The second year of the program results in advanced officer certification. Upon completion of the third year, and all applicable courses, students are awarded an Associates degree in Fire Administration and Technology.

The Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) provides an 80-hour Officer Academy for all new officers. Officers are detailed to training 8 hours a day for ten days, and return to their stations on on-duty evenings. To date, the program has been taught by the LAFD training staff, with an outside contractor providing some of the Human Relations coursework. However, due to the high costs of the current academy, LAFD is currently in negotiations with a local community college to contract out this training. Under the tentative agreement, LAFD would pay tuition for the students; the college and the LAFD would receive state funding for the contact hours. LAFD is currently establishing a training fund to ensure the state funding is sent directly to LAFD, instead of the general fund of the city (Casas).

LAFD Officer Academy coursework includes Human Relations curriculum including Community Relations, Media Relations, Probationary Firefighter Issues, Creative Confrontation, EEOC Issues, Sexual Harassment, Career Guidance, Time Management, and Leadership Training. Technical coursework includes Tactics and Simulations, Technical Rescue Awareness, Minimum Company Standards, Instructor Training, Multi-Casualty Incidents, Fire Prevention Issues, Flashover Training, and Operation Officer Issues.

The Houston Fire Department requires newly promoted company officers to attend a 40-hour officer-training course. An 80-hour curriculum has been developed, and will be implemented soon. The 80-hour course covers subjects such as Instructional Techniques, Personnel Issues, Station Management, Human Relations, Leadership Development, Tactics, Scene Management, Ventilation and Fire Attack, Highrise Operations, Fireground Safety, and Special Situations. In addition to the initial officer academy, officers receive 16 hours of continuing education. This continuing education is taught in 4-hour blocks as seminars from a variety of guest lecturers. Most seminars cover leadership and management related topics.

Prince George's County, Maryland, requires all officer candidates to complete a 3-week Officer Candidate School in order to become eligible for promotion. This school meets the requirements of NFPA 1021, Fire Officer I & II. The school contains courses on leadership, a 24-hour fire instructor training course, Incident Command, Strategy and Tactics with scenarios, building-specific tactical considerations, hazardous materials, and fire investigation. Non-fire-related coursework includes fire station management, report writing, employee assistance orientation, disciplinary procedures, labor relations, cultural

diversity, administrative procedures, management and supervision, and health and safety concerns (Capron, 1992).

Santa Ana, California, adopted a 40-hour initial officer-training curriculum as a result of a comprehensive survey of the officers within their department. The 40-hour curriculum was organized according to the perceived need of the workforce for instruction in eight specific areas. The curriculum is organized as follows: firefighting tactics (15 hours), supervision (10 hours), fire prevention (4 hours), investigation (3 hours), records and reports (3 hours), instructor training (2 hours), departmental policies (2 hours), organizational goals and objectives (1 hour) (Bowman, 1990).

The State of Florida has had an established Fire Officer Certification program for many years; however, no fire department in the state requires its mid-level or lower-level supervisors to obtain this certification (Cavallari, 1997). The program consists of 40-hour college courses, each offering three college credits. “Fire Service Instructor: Methods and Techniques” explores the methods and mechanics of teaching, as well as measurement of teaching effectiveness. “Company Officer” covers fire department organization and administration, management theory, leadership, communication, motivation, and group dynamics. “Hazardous Materials I and II” are based on the NFA “Site Operating Practices” program and thoroughly cover all aspects of hazardous materials storage, identification, and response. “Firefighting Tactics and Strategy” covers the basics of coping with fires and emergencies and evaluation of response strategies. “Fire Prevention Practices” is a complete study of fire inspection practices, as well as fire prevention bureau operations. “Private Fire Protection Systems” studies private detection and

suppression systems in terms of need, construction, maintenance, and use (Cavallari, 1997).

California has also offered a state Fire Officer certification for several years through the community colleges. The program consists of eight core classes (24 units), for a total of 480 hours. The certification also requires a prerequisite experience level for completion (Bowman, 1990).

National Fire Officer standards have been adopted by the NFPA as NFPA 1021. The Texas Commission on Fire Protection has recently adopted these standards as well. The Fire Officer I & II certification standards are organized into seven general subject areas: F.D. Organization, Human Resource Management, Community and Government Relations, Administration, Inspection and Investigation, Emergency Service Delivery, and Safety. Fire Officer II contains further training in the same seven subject areas as Fire Officer I.

2. What officer training do Fort Worth officers feel they need?

An open-ended survey (Appendix D) was e-mailed to all FWFD firefighters and officers to determine their perception of the need for an Officer Development Program. One hundred and forty surveys were completed and returned by civil service personnel within the department. Surveys were received from each division of the department. When asked if the FWFD adequately prepares its workforce for officer positions, eighty three percent (83%) of the respondents felt the department does not. Eight percent (8%) felt the FWFD “somewhat” prepares individuals for officer positions, but believed further

training and preparation were needed. One respondent felt the FWFD “culture and experience do prepare you,” but believed the problem was that “not all experience is good, and training is needed to supplement experience,” while another respondent felt the department prepares individuals for fire tactics, but not for leading and managing people. Some respondents felt that everything needed to become a good officer is in place (the NFA, TCC fire protection technology program, etc.), however, most don't take advantage of these opportunities because a written test is all that is required to promote. These responses suggest that survey respondents feel the FWFD currently does not adequately prepare its workforce for officer positions.

The focus group (Appendix E) was also asked if the FWFD adequately prepares individuals for officer positions. Nineteen persons attended the first focus group meeting, representing all ranks and eight divisions of the FWFD. All nineteen persons agreed the FWFD does not adequately prepare individuals for officer positions. Many of the concerns discussed above, particularly relating to civil service promotional constraints, were expressed by focus group members. The group also noted the lack of experience of many officers as a critical issue.

Respondents of the FWFD workforce survey were also asked how the department could better develop its officers. Ninety percent believed some sort of officer training is needed in the FWFD. In addition, seven percent (7%) of the respondents believed the length of time required in each rank should be expanded. One respondent felt the state civil service “rule of three,” which allows the fire chief to select one of the top three on a promotional eligibility list, should be used to encourage potential officers to seek further education. Several respondents also felt that critiques of major incidents would be helpful

for officer development. Minimum skill standards and accountability were also mentioned as necessary components for officer development.

The focus group felt that training was badly needed to further develop FWFD officers. Many members of this group felt the current state of officer development is critically deficient, and that safety has become an issue due to lack of experience by many officers. All felt that the lack of experience would continue to be a problem in the future, and that training is needed to fill this gap. Several group members mentioned that previous officer training programs were helpful, but ongoing training is necessary to keep officers proficient in all areas.

Survey respondents offered several suggestions for officer training curriculum. Some of the suggestions related to firefighting included minimum skill standards, building construction, Incident Command, SOP familiarization, fire tactics and scenarios, brush fire tactics, and highrise tactics. Subjects mentioned that were not fire-related included motivation techniques, interpersonal dynamics, writing skills, fire inspection procedures, leadership, psychology, station management, diversity training, and report writing. Seven percent (7%) of the respondents mentioned the need for a mentoring program for young officers to be paired with experienced officers. Post-incident critiques were also mentioned as a means of developing officers' tactical skills.

The focus group mentioned several of the topics noted above. In addition, conflict resolution, communication, liability issues, discipline techniques and alternatives, rookie firefighter development, and inter-department familiarization were also mentioned as elements needed in an officer development program.

These suggestions were evaluated along with many of the subjects contained in existing programs mentioned earlier. Some course topics were combined with similar ones and a Topic Preference Survey of 27 possible course topics (Appendix F), with a short explanation of each, was presented to the focus group and other Fort Worth Firefighters for evaluation. The group was asked to rate each potential subject, on a scale of 1 to 5, in terms of suitability for an officer development program.

The scoring system was organized as follows:

1 = Unnecessary

2 = Somewhat useful

3 = Useful

4 = Very useful

5 = Mandatory

Twenty-two individuals completed the survey. The highest possible overall score a topic could receive was 110, and the lowest was 22.

Apparently, all topics were considered to be useful, as 66 was the lowest score received. Six topics received scores greater than 100. These topics, in order of ranking, included leadership, discipline issues, conflict resolution, fireground tactics and ICS, rookie development and evaluation, and safety practices for company officers. Courses considered very useful, receiving scores between 88 and 100, included writing skills, report writing, community relations, instructional techniques for company officers, engine company operations, truck and quint company operations, and building construction. The remainder of courses, in descending order, included highrise tactics, computer skills, sexual harassment issues, diversity in the workplace, EMS

documentation and legal considerations, saving our own review, time management, media relations, flashover chamber review, Q&A with senior staff, specialty team overviews, fire inspection practices, employee assistance program, and departmental overviews.

3. What curriculum could the Fort Worth Fire Department include in an officer development program?

Research indicated that a variety of subjects were taught in the various programs examined. Most of the departments surveyed indicated that their programs were successful in preparing their officers. Most programs examined followed the NFPA 1021 curriculum standard and covered a variety of topics (Table 1).

Table 1.

Course and Hours by Department

	Phoenix	LAFD	OKCFD	Prince G. Co.	Santa Ana	Houston
Diversity	1:00					
Tactics & ICS	18:00	5:00	8:00	18:00	15:00	27:00
Building Construction	4:00			3:00		
Ladder Co. Ops.	4:00					
Engine Co. Ops.	4:00					
Leadership		16:00	16:00	4:00		2:00
Personnel Mgmt.	6:30			22:00	10:00	8:00
EAP	1:30			1:30		
Specialty Ops.	3:30	2:00	2:00			5:00
EMS Mgmt.	2:00	3:30		2:00		
Instructional Technique	4:00	4:00	2:00	25:00:00	2:00	16:00
Haz-Mat	3:30			4:00		
EMS Documentation	2:30					
CISD	1:30					
Arson Investigation	1:30		2:00	2:00	3:00	
Safety Practices	2:30		4:00	3:00		4:00

	Phoenix	LAFD	OKCFD	Prince G. Co.	Santa Ana	Houston
Fire Prevention	1:30	1:30	2:00	2:00	4:00	
Q&A with Chief/Staff	2:00					
Community Relations	2:00	2:00		2:00		
Probationary FF Development		1:30	6:00			
Media Relations		2:00		1:30		
Conflict Resolution		8:00				4:00
EEOC/Harassment		2:00	4:00	2:00		4:00
Flashover Training		8:00				
Brush Fire Tactics		8:00				
Station/Time Mgmt.		2:30		2:00		14:00
Career Guidance		1:30				
Public Ed.			4:00			
Domestic Preparedness			4:00			
FD overview/update			4:00	2:00	1:00	
Computer skills			4:00			
Report Writing				4:00	3:00	
Disciplinary Procedures				2:00		

The internal survey and focus group indicated a strong desire for officer training within the Fort Worth Fire Department as well. They indicated that the skills and abilities needed in a good officer were competency, leadership, motivation, people skills, organizational ability, as well as tactical skills. Other topics desired were station management, conflict resolution, diversity, communications, report writing, discipline techniques, and motivational techniques.

DISCUSSION

“Most organizations have a thorough plan for managing their fleet. We are overdue in providing similar guidance for managing our human resources as well” (Compton, 2000). Nowhere else is this any truer than in the Fort Worth Fire Department. Fort Worth is known nationally for its apparatus program but it has not delivered an

officer training program since 1988. The turnover rate, coupled with the decline of on-the-job training opportunities, has resulted in a workforce that desires to make a difference in their community but are not provided the proper tools to accomplish that mission. This position has been supported by the internal surveys conducted within our department and through the focus group. Officers and firefighters alike are aware of the changing environment in which we must function. New technology is being developed almost daily while the diversity of the workforce undergoes a dramatic change. All of these factors must be managed in a positive and coordinated manner through the use of well-trained and well-motivated officers.

Initial officer training is obviously greatly needed. No one factor has a more ultimate effect on a fire department's operations than its training program (Didactic Systems Inc., 1985). If Fort Worth is going to continue to be effective in delivering emergency services to the citizens of Fort Worth, then it must be prepared to invest the resources, both financial and human, into developing and maintaining an ongoing training program for its workforce. This is particularly true of the segment of the workforce that we depend upon day in and day out to manage our organization – the officer. Ninety percent (90%) of all respondents of the FWFD workforce survey believed that officer training is needed in Fort Worth.

The focus of any officer development program must be geared towards developing future leaders of the fire service. This emphasis on leadership and professional development represents a trend in the fire service from the old rules of command and control to an emphasis on “building relationships based on character and competence” (Caldwell and Hynes, 1996). Leadership cannot be taught by merely

delivering one 8-hour training class every ten to twenty years, but must be an ongoing, multi-faceted effort by the department and the individuals involved to assure the competence of fire service leadership. “Leadership must be taught through formal training programs, advanced education, on-the-job training, vicarious learning experiences, and mentoring” (Grant and Hoover, 1994). Study of other departments similar to Fort Worth indicated that this was true. The Houston Fire Department conducts a 40-hour initial officer training program followed up by 16 hours of continuing education taught in 4-hour blocks. The State of Florida has established a Fire Officer Certification program that consist of 40-hour college courses. California has developed a Fire Officer certification program consisting of eight core classes for a total of 480 hours.

In addition to initial training, officer training should be conducted continuously. “As technologies change, management techniques evolve, and fireground technical operations evolve, it is imperative that officers continue to receive training and guidance in these, and other areas” (Gardiner, 1992). The Fire Service cannot continue to overlook the value and importance of its company officers. They are the vital link to a successful organization and must receive the appropriate attention and resources to develop and maintain their skill levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically, the Fort Worth Fire Department has not provided an adequate amount of ongoing officer training. Many departments throughout the United States are confronted with the same demands to provide well-trained and well-motivated officers. Many of these departments have been successful in providing officer development

training programs for their officers while Fort Worth has lagged behind in this critical area. Research has shown that many elements of these programs may be applicable to Fort Worth. Based on the information gathered through this study, the following recommendations should be pursued by the Fort Worth Fire Department:

1. The Fort Worth Fire Department should develop an Officer Development Program based on the guidelines adopted by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection. The Officer Development Program for the FWFD should be a multi-faceted program, addressing all areas of education. The areas that need to be addressed are:
 - Delivery of an Officer Training Academy to all FWFD officers
 - Initial officer training for new officers prior to or upon promotion
 - Continuing education on officer-specific topics
 - Encouragement of higher education

2. Employees buy in and participation is crucial if an Officer Development program is going to be successful. It is recommended that the Fort Worth Fire Department establish a standing Officer Development committee comprised of employees from all levels of the organization to review the course curriculum of the department's program on an ongoing basis.

3. Successful Officer Development programs are comprised of many different elements. It is recommended that the Fort Worth Fire Department conduct further studies of successful programs in an effort to develop and improve its own successful program.

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APENDICIES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX E

APPENDIX F